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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MAY 27, 2009

Summary: Supreme Court's judgment pronouncing former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz Sharif eligible to contest election and hold public office dominated headlines in all newspapers on Wednesday. All newspapers highlighted Prime Minister's statement declaring "Malakand division (Swat valley) a calamity-hit area." President Zardari's remarks that he made while talking to the visiting delegation of the U.S. senators that "winning the hearts and minds of the IDPs was a critical component of the war against militancy, therefore, the international community must step forward and assist Pakistan in this regard" received prominent display. All newspapers reported that "ground forces, backed by tanks and helicopters moved into South Waziristan and after clashes with militants secured several key areas." Several major newspapers reported that more "relief supplies for the displaced persons arrived from the United States," and that the "U.S. pledged \$4 million for HEC (Higher Education Commission) financial aid program."

Most major dailies ran editorials on a variety of subjects including the Supreme Court's verdict on Sharif brothers' eligibility, IDPs' issue, North Korean nuclear tests, and Israel's decision to provide AWACS aircrafts to India and so forth. The prestigious English daily, "Dawn," while describing the Supreme Court's verdict as "positive," also maintained that "there is no doubt that activities of politicians and public officials need to be scrutinized and the wrongdoers among them punished." The Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam," termed the verdict as a "significant step to undo the dictatorial decisions of the Musharraf regime." However, the Lahore-based populist Urdu daily "Khabrain," editorialized that "this is not a good trend in politics that favorable verdicts are welcomed while allegations are hurled if the decisions are not favorable." End Summary.

News Stories

"From On-The-Run To In-The-Run; SC Allows Sharifs To Contest Elections" "The News" (05/27)

"The Supreme Court on Tuesday declared former Prime Minister and PML-N Quaid Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and his brother Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif eligible to contest election and hold public office, quashing its earlier decision and also of the Lahore High Court, which had disqualified them."

"Malakand Declared Calamity-Hit Area" "Dawn" (05/27)

"Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has declared the Malakand division a calamity-hit area and waived land revenue and other taxes on Tuesday."

"President, PM Say Now It's World's Turn To 'Do More'" "The News" (05/27)

"President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday said winning the hearts and minds of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) was a critical component of the war against militancy and, therefore, the international community must step forward and assist Pakistan in this regard. He was talking to a delegation of the U.S. Senators, who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The delegation comprised Senators Thomas Carper, Mark Udall, Jeanne Shaheen, Kay R. Hagan and Mark Bagich. The U.S. delegation also called on Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani separately at the Prime Minister House. Talking to the U.S. Senators, Gilani expressed Pakistan's concern over the attitude of the international community towards the internally displaced persons as so far very little of the pledged assistance had been received."

"U.S. To Help In Resumption Of Pak-India Dialogue: Senators" "Dawn" (05/27)

"The United States would play a role in resumption of Pakistan-India composite dialogue for the resolution of all the outstanding issues between the two countries including the core issue of Kashmir. This was stated by Senator Thomas Carper leader of the visiting U.S. Senate delegation during their meeting with Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani at the Prime Minister's House in Islamabad on Tuesday afternoon, says an official handout."

"Nuclear Assets Are Safe: Gen. Tariq" "Dawn" (05/27)

"Gen. Tariq Majid, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, has termed concerns over safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear assets unfounded. Gen. Tariq was talking to a delegation of U.S. Senators, led by Thomas Carper, which called on him at the joint staff Headquarters."

"Troops Clash With Militants In South Waziristan" "Dawn" (05/27)

"Ground forces, backed by tanks and helicopters moved into South Waziristan on Tuesday and after clashes with militants secured several key areas and an important road. Official sources said that six militants were killed and at least 12 others injured. Three soldiers were injured in the clashes."

"U.S. Provides Urgently Needed Air-Conditioned Tents, Electrical Generators To IDP Camps" "Dawn" (05/27)

"More urgently needed U.S. relief supplies earmarked for those displaced by Pakistan's ongoing military operations against extremists was turned over to Pakistani officials at Chaklala Air Base near Islamabad on Tuesday. The shipment of 50 air conditioning units, 25 power generators, and associated electrical distribution hardware will be sent to camps housing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)."

"U.S. Provides \$4 Million To Expand Higher Education Financial Aid Programs In Pakistan" "Dawn" (05/27)

"United States Agency for International Development (USAID) National Conference on Public-Private Partnerships for Higher Education launched USAID's Higher Education Commission Financial Aid Development (HEC-FAD) Program. This \$4 million program aims to expand and improve financial aid programs for higher education in Pakistan."

"U.S. Sets Up Special Counter-Insurgency Fund" "Dawn" (05/27)

"The Obama administration has established a special \$400 million annual fund to help Pakistan fight extremists who Washington fears could threaten the entire region if not curbed. The program, called the Pakistan Counter-insurgency Capabilities Fund, will provide the Pakistani military with equipment and training for counter-insurgency missions. "

"Forces Capture Half Of Mingora; ISPR Says 29 Militants Killed in 24 Hours" "The News" (05/27)

"Security forces have gained control of half of Mingora city and killed 29 militants in various areas of Swat Valley during the last 24 hours besides arresting 14 others, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Major General Athar Abbas said on Tuesday."

"Swat Operation Ahead Of Schedule" "Daily Times" (05/27)

"Operation Rah-e-Rast is ahead of schedule and is forcing the Taliban to 'give up mentally and psychologically,' Peshawar Corps Commander Lt Gen Masood Aslam told 'Daily Times' on Tuesday, adding that more areas have yet to be cleared before declaring an end to the offensive."

"Operation In Bajaur Imminent, Tribesmen Told" "Dawn" (05/27)

"The administration of the Bajaur Agency has given six days to Mamond tribesmen to leave the area because of an imminent military operation for flushing out militants. Political Agent Shafirullah Khan said that since tribal elders failed to dissuade Taliban from fighting security forces, the government was left with no other option but to launch a military operation."

"Seven Militants Killed In SWA" "The News" (05/27)

"The security forces on Tuesday launched a military operation against the Baitullah Mahsud-led militants in South Waziristan tribal region, reportedly killing seven militants, official and tribal sources told 'The News.'"

"Was Fazlullah Taken Out in The Friday Night Bunker Hit?" "The News" (05/27)

"Mystery surrounds the fate of a top-level Taliban occupant of a hilltop bunker in village Datta Khra, between the former Taliban stronghold of Kabal and Shamoza, which was completely destroyed in a gunship helicopter attack last Friday evening. The possibility of Taliban commander Maulana Fazlullah being the prized casualty is not being ruled out by top military sources, but due to the sensitivity of the issue, no one is even willing to brook a guess."

"Cracks Emerge In TTP Ranks" "The Nation" (05/27)

"Pakistani Taliban led by South Waziristan based Baitullah Mehsud is no more a solidly unified entity as fissures and cracks are emerging in its ranks and files, an official with knowledge of ongoing developments in Swat said on Tuesday desiring not to be named. He said that not only the TTP was experiencing differences in its ranks but its leader was also facing another serious problem with a tribal commander Qari Zainuddin challenging his absolute writ in the Mehsud area of South Waziristan."

"20 Militants, Two Troops Die In Clash" "Dawn" (05/27)

"Twenty militants and two security personnel were killed in a clash which followed an attack by militants on a checkpoint on Kalpani (Timergara) hills on late Monday night. According to officials, the heavy exchange of fire continued for over two hours."

"Three Cops, One Militant Killed In Haripur Encounter" "The News" (05/27)

"Three cops and a suspected militant were killed and an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) sustained bullet wounds in a pre-dawn encounter with local and foreign militants in Malikyar village in Haripur on Tuesday."

"10 Mahsud Aides Held" "The News" (05/27)

"The Police Special Investigation Unit and Intelligence Agencies in a joint action arrested eight alleged accomplices of Taliban Supreme Commander Baitullah Mahsud in Karachi on Tuesday. Sources disclosed that their 7 accomplices are still at large."

"U.S. Jets Violate Pak Airspace" "The Nation" (05/27)

"Fear and horror were triggered among the masses when America's jet fighters B-52 intruded into Pakistan's airspace from Afghanistan border, witnessed said. The jet fighters travelled at low altitude in the bordering Meradin area, located some 35 Kilometers away from Miramshah, headquarters of North Waziristan Agency."

"126,000 Fleeing Conflict Zones Daily, Says UN" "Dawn" (05/27)

"About 126,000 people are daily fleeing fighting in northwest Pakistan in one of the 'fastest major displacements' in recent years, the UN refugee agency said on Tuesday, said Ron Redmond, spokesman for the UNHCR."

"N. Korea Fires Missiles After Nuclear Test" "Dawn" (05/27)

"North Korea reportedly fired two short-range missiles on Tuesday, in a move set to heighten tensions after its latest nuclear weapons test drew global condemnation."

Editorials/Op-eds

"A Positive Verdict," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/27)

"There is a need for a transparent accountability process of politicians. Shutting the Sharifs out of politics while others with dubious pasts were allowed to run for office was wrong. But there is no doubt that activities of politicians and public officials need to be scrutinized and the wrongdoers among them punished. If those tasked with governing the country are themselves above the law, it makes a mockery of the idea of the rule of law."

"Eligibility Of Sharif Brothers," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (05/27)

"Supreme Court's verdict is a significant step to undo the dictatorial decisions of the Musharraf regime in the Pakistani politics. Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif must be happy that they have directly benefited from their struggle for the independence of judiciary. Time has come for Nawaz Sharif to play his pivotal role in the politics at this critical juncture."

"Supreme Court Decision On The Sharif Brothers' Eligibility," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (05/27)

"Mian Nawaz has reacted to the Supreme Court verdict in his favor by saying that the country is now heading in the right direction. We feel that this is not a good trend in politics that favorable verdicts are welcomed while allegations are hurled if the decisions are not favorable. This harms the democratic process."

"North Korea's Nuclear Test," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (05/27)

"Prudence demands that discriminatory attitude about nuclear capabilities [of different countries] should end and all the countries that have tested nuclear devices should be recognized as the nuclear powers.... Only then comes the planning to rid the globe of the nuclear weapons."

"North Korean Test," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/27)

"The double standards applied by the international community in the case of nuclear weapons need to change. There can be no justice in permitting them to some while denying them to others. Judging nations as 'good' or 'bad' will always be a game of subjectivity. The case of Israel demonstrates the truth in this. The North Korean experiment is a reminder of this. Atomic bombs are indeed dangerous. Perhaps a uniform policy aimed at ridding the world of the menace they present then needs to be applied to all nations, whether big or small, powerful or weak."

"N. Korea's Nuclear Adventure," an editorial in the Karachi-based

center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/27)

"What prompted North Korea, an impoverished and economically devastated country, to opt for its second nuclear test in less than three years? It will find few supporters for its actions as its domestic compulsions and foreign policy goals do not really justify a costly nuclear program. In fact, the latter works against it by vitiating the environment in the region and raising the suspicions of neighboring states... Without clear indications on North Korea's part, the Obama administration has not been able to formulate a coherent North Korean policy."

"Lessons From North Korea's Test," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/27)

"As Mohamed ElBaradei, the outgoing Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has made clear, the non-proliferation regime has to be made fair and the world has to be configured such that states do not consider that nuclear weapons potential can be the currency of power - or at least buy security against external aggression. Mr. Obama talked about banning the bomb during his campaign. He has also spoken about tightening the non-proliferation regime. But as Mr. ElBaradei has said, neither can be done until the U.S. can take the lead and go for deep cuts before the 2010 NPT review conference. Any move against offending states like North Korea must have the moral weight of manifest measures by the bigger powers."

"N. Korea Does It Again," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/27)

"International strategic experts are of the opinion that the objective of the test is to win the attention of the Obama administration to push the North Korea issue up the agenda.... The need is to build confidence among the weaker and small nations against the powerful ones who dictate terms and create instability through different means. This hostile attitude by the neighbors and major players in the international arena forces the weaker ones to pursue for means for deterrence against aggression."

"North Korean N-Tests," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (05/27)

"North Korean action seems to have put the US in a rather awkward position, when it chooses to ignore a clandestinely nuclear Israel and is bent upon unraveling the NPT by providing India civilian use nuclear technology.... The NPT has lost its significance due to a unilateralist approach adopted by the US, especially after 9/11. The U.S. and its allies need to rethink their North Korea policy."

"Provision Of AWACS To India And The Satanic Triumvirate," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/27)

"First AWACS plane from Israel has arrived in India.... Pakistan had been asking for AWACS since 1980s in order to protect its eastern border from possible Indian aggression. Despite the fact that Democratic and Republicans admitted the services rendered by General Ziaul Haq and Musharraf, none of the parties accepted the two military dictators' requests.... The supply of the AWACS plane(s) has proved that in this region America only cares about India."

"India Gets AWACS," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/27)

"By spending so much, New Delhi on the one hand has ignored millions of poverty stricken Indians, and on the other, it intends fuelling a new arms race in the Subcontinent. Pakistan under these circumstances cannot remain indifferent and would therefore be forced to take necessary steps. Israel has always sided with New Delhi in its attempts to dominate Islamabad. Its strategy to arm India with aircraft that are counted among the most sophisticated in the world poses a serious threat to Pakistan."

"Induction of AWACS Into South Asia," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir.

5,000) (05/27)

"The sale of Boeing P-8 maritime patrol aircraft worth \$2.1 billion will take away the edge Pakistan had because of its acquisition of older generation P-3s from the United States. All this should be a matter of concern to our policy makers, who must tell the United States and other countries that Pakistan will have no option but to upgrade its nuclear deterrence in the face of widening gap in conventional arms capability between Pakistan and India."

"Taliban Under Pressure," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/27)

"The operation in Swat has exposed the vulnerabilities of the Taliban elsewhere too. Forced to mobilize on a big scale in South Waziristan, Mohmand and Orakzai, they have had to expose their Uzbek and Arab warriors to the Pakistan Army, resulting in their capture. Knowledge of their tactics by now should enable us to predict their behavior. The Taliban will melt away. They will begin recovering from the shock they have received from the Army. The trend of kidnappings will become strong to fill the fast-emptying kitty of the Taliban warlord. Funds will be sought from the Arabs in the Gulf who think that the Taliban are busy defeating the Americans in Pakistan. And more weapons will be inducted into the region. Now is the time to broaden and intensify the war against the Taliban and not give them time to regroup and come back again."

"Military Might," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/27)

"To keep up morale and ensure we can build a united front against militants, preventing any attempt at a future resurgence, a long-term recovery plan for Swat and other areas needs to be announced now. The militant move to pull back from Mingora suggests they may be thinking of further action at some point later, after troop numbers have been reduced in the area. This after all is a game they are experienced in. Our best hope against such tactics is to ensure local people are ready to fight them off."

"Assistance For IDPs And International Community's Responsibilities," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (05/27)

"This is the biggest ever internal displacement in Pakistan. No doubt, the federal government as well as the provincial administration along with other national and international organizations are leaving no stone unturned to provide assistance to the IDPs of Swat valley, but the problem is so enormous that the international community will have to come forward to lend a helping hand in these efforts."

"Worrisome Dimensions Of IDPs Issue," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/27)

"The Government and the international community are doing their best to provide them every comfort at camps set up close to their areas. There are apprehensions that IDPs are being misused by land and drug mafia that is taking them to different corners of the country in fulfillment of their nefarious designs. This aspect should be looked into seriously."

"Whose War Is This?," an editorial in the Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (05/27)

"Prime Minister Gilani has declared that the war on terror is Pakistan's own war. We would like to ask that if this war is ours, then whom we are fighting with? Are we not fighting with our own Muslim brethren? More than 66 thousand expecting mothers have taken refuge in the IDPs camps. Will Prime Minister tell us for whose survival this war is vital? Pakistan has suffered more than anyone else in this American war, how can we call it as our war?"

"Crises That Loom Beyond The Military Action," an op-ed by Shireen M. Mazari in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/27)

"Coming back to the issue of religious extremism, one fallout of the

military operation is going to be a dangerous coalescing of this brand of extremism with the political and economically marginalized segments of our society - the numbers now growing because of the manner in which the IDPs are being treated by the state and its various entities. Unless there is a qualitative change in the state's approach to this issue of violent extremism, we are not going to rid ourselves of militancy - whatever label it is given."

"What Next?," an op-ed Asad Munir in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/27)

"The way Operation Rahe-e-Rast is being conducted, one can assume that within eight to ten weeks, may be earlier, the forces will flush out terrorists from Malakand. The Taliban will resort to suicide bombing and other terrorist activities to pressurize the government, demoralize the public and divert army's efforts in other direction. However, since all the segments of society have realized that the Taliban are a threat to the security of the country, the terrorists are likely to fail in their design."

"How Many 'Bombs' Will Deter?," an op-ed Zubeida Mustafa in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/27)

"As Pakistan plods on with its war in Malakand against the Taliban and struggles to cope with the hundreds of thousands who are being displaced, controversy over its nuclear arsenal would be the last thing it would ask for.... There is a need to reduce our excessive dependence on the United States which forces us in to a position of subservience allowing us little room for maneuver.... It must be remembered that if our dependence on the U.S. keeps growing and we cannot even mobilize our resources for the social sector, Pakistan will be reduced to being a banana republic."

"Government Should Take Notice Of U.S. Violation Of Pakistani Airspace" an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 10,000) (05/27)

"Let it be recalled here that U.S. helicopters violated Pakistani airspace early yesterday morning. In this perspective, it was being expected that during their meetings with the U.S. Senators, the national leadership including the President, the PM and Mian Nawaz Sharif would raise this issue with them. However, this did not happen. It is our leaders' duty to repeat their protest on the drone strikes with each U.S. delegation that visits Pakistan, so that when these delegations return to the U.S., they can put pressure on administration officials and Pentagon."
Patterson